

CO-OPERATIVE REVIEW

The Business Advisory Service by Brian Greer

WHO WE ARE

The Business Advisory Service operates as part of the Co-operative Federation of Victoria, and its staff are employed by the Council of the Federation. The current staff of two is made up of Brian Greer (Co-operative Development Advisor) and more recently, Joanne Sarlin (Assistant). The Service was established for and is financed by the Victorian State Government's Co-operative Development Program as one part of the Program's two-fold support structure, the other being the Education and Training Unit.

OUR INVOLVEMENT SO FAR

Since it began in July of 1981 the Business Advisory Service has focused a large part of its effort on assisting Co-operatives and groups of people interested in forming Co-operatives to prepare strategic plans for their futures as co-operatively run small businesses. These overall strategic plans have included a detailed business plan - management structure, marketing strategy, and financial budgeting. As well as providing for those involved what I believe is an essential guide to the future of their operation, these plans have also provided the basis of applications for finance to the Funding Committee of the Co-operative Development Program. The type and the amount of assistance provided by the Business Advisory Service to an individual Co-operative or group has varied according to requests received, perceived needs, and time constraints. In general terms the support has covered the following areas:

- * Outlining the needs and details which make-up a strategic plan.
- * Assisting the clarification of basic issues (often management problems) within a Co-operative or group wanting to form a Co-operative.
- * Making marketing and accounting resources available for the relevant parts of the business plan.
- * Providing guidance about the operation of the Funding Committee under the Co-operative Development Program.

Now that the point has been reached where nineteen Co-operatives have been funded by the Co-operative Development Program, I would like to make the following comments:

1. In nearly every case there are needs for ongoing business advice (education and training).
2. In many cases there are basic issues touched on during the planning process which still require further work to resolve.
3. Whereas the initial plan might be completed, planning needs to go on all the time. A detailed review and the construction of a new plan will need to be started well before the end of the current year for the year to follow.
4. The immediate focus needs to be on the successful implementation of the plan that has been established. One of the basic values of a plan is to learn about the operation and ways to

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ADVISORY SERVICE, CONTINUED:

improve it by looking at the reasons for differences between the plan and the actual progress.

THE SERVICES OFFERED

In the broadest terms, the Business Advisory Service's current task is to assist you in the implementation of your business plan. The following points are by way of a preamble to outlining the nature of the assistance available to you:

1. One of the conditions of funding of the Business Advisory Service is, "That activities of the Advisor to be restricted to Co-operatives funded under the Program, unless otherwise approved by the Ministry." It should be noted, however, that the Co-operative Federation is always open to inquiries about Co-operatives.
2. The work of the Business Advisory Service will necessarily involve issues of education and training, especially in the areas of management, accounting and marketing. As a result there will be a close working relationship with the Education and Training Unit.
3. In the light of experience so far it is worth stating that whereas the Co-operative Development Advisor is available for business advice and assistance, the Co-operatives should not rely on the Advisor to perform management functions.
4. Please keep in mind that like the Co-operatives it has been established to service, the Business Advisory Service is relatively new and feeling its way. The following services are those that I see as being currently most relevant. It is fully expected that these services will alter over time with growth. Your suggestions would be welcome:

MANAGEMENT:

- o To assist in putting the various aspects of the business plan into practice in the most effective way.
- o To assist in the continuing process of planning; to help design systems which make for the best use of time and help with personnel time management.
- o To assist to clarify the issues, including structural problems, involved in the successful performance of the management functions within the Co-operative, i.e. administration, sales, accounts reporting, bookkeeping, production quantity and quality.
- o To provide support in business meetings and negotiations.
- o To provide a pool of relevant management people when required and to take part in the selection of persons to perform management functions.

FINANCE/ACCOUNTING:

- o To assist in the establishment of an adequate accounting system for the business by helping to access the system needs, providing a resource of accounting personnel if required and taking part in the interviewing of personnel for accounting functions.
- o To assist in a management accounting role of interpretation of financial reports, and formulation of any necessary action.

MARKETING:

- o To assist in the process of developing and putting into practice a marketing plan. Providing a resource of market consultants and a guide as to how to utilize their time and to take part in the selection of personnel to fill market/sales positions within the Co-operative.
- o To explore and to establish where possible joint marketing opportunities between Co-operatives.

FEASIBILITY STUDIES:

- o To assist in the finding and selection

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Muddling Through

by David Griffiths

The ability to make the right decisions efficiently is critical to the success of co-operative business enterprises. The absence of efficient decision-making is the consequence of a lack of commitment to participatory decision-making, poor planning, and a muddling-through mentality.

What, then, are some examples of muddling through?

1. Failing to provide adequate notice of meetings.
2. Failing to widely publicise meetings.
3. Not circulating reports in advance of meetings.
4. Meetings that do not have an agreed agenda and time limit.
5. Meetings that do not proceed on the basis of an agreed agenda.
6. Meetings that are not chaired.
7. Meetings that accept and do not critically question reports.
8. Meetings that allow individuals to dominate discussions.
9. Meetings that refuse to entertain and develop minority and silent opinion.
10. Assuming that the right to participate creates participation.
11. Assuming that silence is acquiescence.
12. Meetings that do not make decisions and/or fail to clarify decisions.
13. Minutes of meetings that are inadequately detailed.
14. Minutes that are not written-up in a formal Minute Book.
15. Minutes that are not circulated to directors and workers.

What, then, are the ingredients of efficient decision-making?

1. Adequate and wide notice of meetings.
2. Pre-circulation of reports.
3. Meeting agendas and time limits.
4. Properly chaired meetings.
5. Facilitating participation at meetings.
6. Participant preparation before meetings.
7. Clarity of and recording decisions with indication of responsibility for implementation.
8. Accurately written-up and circulated minutes.

Decision-making in co-operatives revolves around three key decision-makers: directors, business managers/co-ordinators, and workers. In the worker-based co-operative the directors and workers are usually the same. In community-based co-operatives, however, the directors and workers are not necessarily the same. In a worker-based co-operative there may be no business manager, the position is rotated, or the business manager is seen as accountable to the other workers. In a community-based co-operative, however, the business manager is accountable to directors and could be seen as accountable to workers.

Apology

A typesetting error in the Co-operative Resource Kit misspelled the WANDERFOOD CO-OPERATIVE.

Our apologies...V.O.C.

ADVISORY SERVICE, CONTINUED:

of the appropriate people to be involved in the study and to assist in the formulation of a contractual agreement about what is to be done, and for how much. Eventually to assist in the conversion of the results of the study into a plan to form the basis of a business plan and application for finance.

LEGAL:

- o To assist in dealings with the Registry of Co-operative Societies.
- o To monitor and contribute to relevant legislative proposals.

MINISTRY:

- o To assist in seeking clarification on a business issue between a Co-operative and the Ministry in relation to the Co-operative Development Program.

INFORMATION DISTRIBUTION:

- o To collect and distribute either directly or through the Newsletter, relevant business information.

GENERAL:

- o To encourage and facilitate communication and activity between Co-operatives.
- o To look ahead at future possible developments which could improve the business prospects of the Co-operatives, such as favorable banking facilities.

HOW TO USE OUR SERVICE

1. Although the Business Advisory Service does not charge out time, the consultants that may be referred to you will charge for their services. Advice is available as to the cost of consultants, how to utilize their time effectively, and the establishment of a contract. Generally speaking, funds for outside help would have been included in individual business plans, and this ought to be kept in mind in the case of further applications.

2. In order to get assistance with your business problems you need to ask. Experience so far has indicated that Co-operatives with business problems often do not look for assistance.
3. The Business Advisory Service has finite resources and works within time constraints. With a potential demand for the Service coming from the nineteen Co-operatives within the Program it is important to book time ahead as far as possible and to do the necessary preparation so as to get the most out of the time when it comes around.
4. It is within your interests to keep the Business Advisory Service apprised of your business activities so that you can obtain maximum benefit from its services.

IN CONCLUSION

Hopefully this description has provided you with an understanding of the Business Advisory Service, and will enable you to apply its services to your Co-operative. If you wish to know more, and indeed if you wish to use our service(s), please contact us....

Brian Greer
Co-operative Development Advisor

and

Joanne Sarlin
Assistant

Located at 225 Swanston Street
MELBOURNE

Telephone: 663 2921

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PRINTED BY THE BRUNSWICK WORK
CO-OPERATIVE.

The Politics of Co-operative Survival

by Neville Stern

Some sort of hard-nosed debate is long overdue, I think, on that perennial problem of work co-ops: "How do we balance our social objectives with the requirements of running a business?" It strikes me that both parts of that dilemma need an overhaul, in the light of current politics and the reduction in the amount of public funding happening generally.

No, I'm not about to "do the nasty", and recommend cut-throat labour-reducing anti-community tactics for co-operative survival. But it is important to get some honesty into a very cloudy debate. For instance, I've heard co-op representatives state the problem as if it were axiomatic that their co-operative could survive as a business if it dropped its social concerns. Not so, as many are finding out. Your cut-throat business will go ahead and fail anyway, for all the usual reasons why small businesses fail. On the other side of the debate, what are the social objectives? Really. To "help the kids" and reduce unemployment? The answer tends in practice, rather disappointingly, to be "no", or at least "not in the short term". The number of permanent, secure jobs created for unskilled school-leavers hovers around the zilch mark. Similarly with the number of "kids helped". The "reduce unemployment - start a co-op" line was pushed by the last State government, as part of their belief in market solutions to social problems. It remains to be seen how the new government deals with this kind of misleading hype.

What are we doing, then, if the cold reality is that most of us are somewhere in between a rather shaky business enterprise and a rather inadequate community group?

The real mistake, I think lies in the expectation that one way or another, co-operatives will provide a solution to one or more social problems (nasty commercialism, depressing unemployment...). What many of us tend to

miss is that co-ops are no more (or less) than one strategy amongst many to initiate some social change. The kind of change that may only happen in the long term. A vision I've always had of Brunswick - or any other active community - is of its capacity to sustain a wide range of different projects with common aims of social change. Since one activity - be it a welfare service, a women's refuge, a drop-in and counselling centre, or a city farm - cannot provide all of the social answer, it's best not to be single-minded, and better to allow and encourage a diversity of options. No concentrating all the eggs in one basket.

What this kind of more even-minded approach suggest for co-operatives is that there is no shame in not being able to do everything. The capacity, the feasibility, simply isn't there. The social objectives nobly enshrined up front in the Model Rules are really pious hopes, that require a lot of other things to happen in society before your co-op can begin to achieve a part of what you want to do.

So the "How do we achieve our social objectives?" part of the dilemma has to be revised. Now to me the immediate social objectives of a co-op should be to survive. Not at any cost, but nonetheless to treat its continuing existence as its highest priority. Why do I say this, you might ask, suspecting that this is really "doing the nasty" but all dressed up? My main reason is that the kind of social change co-operatives are best suited for is the establishing of more co-operatives - change in the workplace, the creation of a new industrial and economic base, and most importantly establishing a co-operative movement that collectively initiates wider changes...Who knows? These may even turn out to help the kids. This is long term stuff, though - no monthly figures of jobs created. In the short term, co-ops are simply locally-based levers, exerting a pressure, demonstrating something by their presence, by the kind of sympathetic community support they engender, by the kind of work they do and how they do it.

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CO-OP SURVIVAL, CONTINUED:

It's a matter of defining your function. For instance, Brunswick has gone through many agonizing changes, as we struggled with what the differences were between community workers and co-operative workers, between a drop-in centre and a workplace, between a community resource centre and a workshop which needed trade as well as funding. So the debate isn't that simple, and definition of aims and objectives not that easy. When you add to these difficulties the fact of a disintegrating political cohesion in Brunswick, the "single issue" mob vs. the "multiple strategy" bods, then indeed the question of balancing social objectives with business becomes messy indeed. But somewhere along the line, the function of your co-op has to be realistically defined, and somewhere along the line you have to face the criticisms of the welfare workers who claim your co-operative hasn't got time for them or the kids anymore.

The practicalities of this revised function have meant, for us, an extremely active debate on whether Brunswick should be a worker co-op rather than a work co-op. One of the lines of argument has been, cut the hype (meaning hypocrisy) about creating lots of work for the unemployed community, and strengthen the commitment of workers actually in the co-op by establishing their legal control. What about community responsibility and participation, was the counter-argument. Here you have a new version of social objectives vs. survival. The pragmatic answer coming out of all this, is that you don't cease to be a community group by becoming a worker co-op - you don't lose your community presence, your community activity, in fact, you community responsibility, because that's where your work is coming from, and that's who you're doing the work for. You become a political co-operative, like Sybylla Press, for instance - rather than a Boy Scout activity.

Pragmatics, man.

HODJA

The Immigration Game

Although over 42% of Australians were born overseas or have parents who were born overseas, multiculturalism, in the sense of a vibrant, positive, and informed appreciation of cultural diversity, far from being a reality for the Australian community, is in fact, a myth.

Launching the Hodja Educational Resources Co-operative Phillip Adams referred to the survey conducted by his firm into people's attitudes towards their membership in Australia's "mixed" society - only 19% were actively in favor of the multicultural status quo. Just under 50% were unequivocally racist.

In such a gloomy scenario the attitudes of adults were perhaps beyond redemption, but Hodja was to be commended, Adams said, for its efforts to foster alternative convictions in the young.

The Immigration Game and handbook for teachers, published by Hodja, has something to say about the background lives of people who sit alongside children in classrooms, and about their parents and grandparents. Adams toyed with the fantasy of what might be achieved were The Immigration Game to replace Monopoly as the world's most popular game, teaching something more relevant to Australian students than skills with which to wrk the ropes of capitalism in boom-time London.

If Hodja material is to be effective in fostering positive and informed multicultural values in schools, it needs to continue to produce high quality materials at low cost, keeping in mind the needs of minority groups. The English-Vietnamese Maths Dictionary shows what it is possible to produce when policy is not governed solely by profit motives.

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Co-operation in Industry

by W.W. Rawlinson,

Co-operative Federation of Victoria

The type of co-operative described in Victoria as a community employment co-operative is referred to in other parts of the world as worker co-operatives, industrial co-operatives, and sometimes as producer co-operatives. By whatever name they may be called, all subscribe to the principles of full co-operation between labour and capital in their enterprise, the elimination of the "we" and "they" situation in their operating structure, and equitable distribution of surplus.

While this type of co-operative appears to be new in Australia, they were in fact operating in the Mining Industry in the 1860's and a co-operative boot factory is known to have been established in 1893. These are long since gone. However, in Britain during the economic struggles in the 19th Century, worker co-operatives were developed, and of these at least three survive and are operating successfully. (These are in addition to the 350 worker co-operatives developed in recent years). The three survivors are Walsell Locks Co-operative formed in 1873, Equity Shoes formed in 1886, and Leicester Printing formed in 1893.

Except for some school leavers all of the workers are members. They are also members of the relevant Trade Unions, and have never had to deal with a strike.

Walsell Locks makes locks for Bedford Commercial Vehicles Land Rover and Range Rovers, as well as for the National Coal Board and Government. Equity Shoes has 210 employees and is increasing its markets both on the home front and in the export field. Leicester Printing has adopted modern technological changer, up-dating to two-colour printing presses and photocopying units. Nearly all the 82 workers are members; three of them are directors. The remaining Board seats are filled by former

workers or by shareholders from union or co-operative sectors. The workers and shareholders share in the distribution of the profits.

INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY IN AUSTRALIA

The concept of worker participation in Australian business is not new. We have the well-known example of Fletcher Jones and staff, Siddons Industries, and Modern Maid as prototypes. However, an innovation has occurred on the Australian scene as a result of the experiences of some of these successful experiments and the election of Senator Siddons to the Commonwealth Parliament. On the 26th of November, 1981 a Bill for an Act to encourage industrial democracy in Australian enterprises was passed in the Senate and had its first reading in the House of Representatives on the 16th of February, 1982.

The essentials of the Bill are the establishment of an Industrial Democracy Board which will register businesses as Industrial Democracy Enterprises.

To qualify for such registration an enterprise must:

- (a) ensure at least 8% of its issued share capital is owned by a substantial proportion of its non-executive employees.
- (b) ensure its activities are carried out through autonomous working groups based on its profit centres:

such groups make decisions on group production, cost objectives, production planning, purchasing, work allocation, appointments, and termination of appointments of staff.
- (c) ensure a profit sharing scheme has been established which takes account of profits before tax in relation to total assets employed of each group and which distributes an agreed proportion of profits within each group to its employees.

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Cooperative PROFILES

BALLARAT EMPLOYMENT CO-OPERATIVE*

32 Lydiard Street (053) 31 6541
BALLARAT

Business Activities: Horticultural
and agricultural services.

66 shareholders and 4 workers.¹

HODJA EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES CO-OP*

123 Church Street (03) 428 1411
RICHMOND

Business Activities: Multicultural
and Multilingual publishing.

36 shareholders and 3.8 workers.

LOCH ARD TRADING CO-OPERATIVE*

56 Liebig Street (055) 62 6388
WARRNAMBOOL

Business Activities: Craft shop
and product distribution.
Recycling Centre.

275 shareholders and 4 workers.

MANDURAH HEALTH FOOD SHOP*

Johnstone's Court (055) 92 1745
TERANG

Business Activities: Health Food
Shop.

shareholders and 4 workers.

BOOTSTRAP TRADING CO-OPERATIVE*

Johnson Street (054) 61 2050
MARYBOROUGH

Business Activities: Chamois and
Spli-Suede clothing and accessories.
Contracted sheepskin products.

50 shareholders and 4 workers.

OPEN CHANNEL*

13-43 Victoria Street (03) 419 5111
FITZROY

Business Activities: Television
production, training and facilities
for hire. Public Television oper-
ator applicant.

200 shareholders and 15 workers.

PUBLIC IMAGES*

3 Freyer Street (03) 397 7349
WILLIAMSTOWN

Business Activities: Public murals.

shareholders and 4 workers.

ITALO-AUSTRALIAN EMPLOYMENT CO-OP*

c/o 207 Weston Street (03) 387 1973
EAST BRUNSWICK

Business Activities: Osteria, Eating
House.

shareholders and 5 workers.

BRUNSWICK WORK CO-OPERATIVE*

173 Albion Street (03) 383 3087
BRUNSWICK

Business Activities: Silkscreen
and Offset printing.

80 shareholders and 6 workers.

CORRECT LINE GRAPHICS*

256 Brunswick Street (03) 417 1518
FITZROY

Business Activities: Typesetting
and Graphics services.

17 shareholders and 5 workers.

GOLDFIELDS COMMUNITY RADIO CO-OP*

Station Street (054) 74 2511
HARCOURT

Business Activities: Public Radio
Station.

98 shareholders and 3 workers.

FRANKSTON MOTOR CYCLE PARK CO-OP*

c/o (03) 781 3555
31-33 Davey Street Ext. 296
FRANKSTON

Business Activities: Motor cycle
park, cycle repairs and kiosk.

shareholders and 3 workers.

SYBYLLA CO-OPERATIVE PRESS LTD.*

322 Park Street (03) 387 3731
NORTH CARLTON

Business Activities: Printing and
Publishing.

CO-OPERATIVE PROFILES, CONTINUED:

WANDERFOOD⁺

c/o Ministry of Employment
and Training

Business Activities: Mobile Health
Food service.

shareholders and 8 workers.

* Signifies operating business.

+ Signifies proposed business.

¹ Since the shareholder and worker
figures were obtained there may
have been increases. The Sybilla
Press, for example, planned to
have three people employed full-
time by the end of April 1982.

No shareholders because the group
is not yet incorporated.

There are a further five groups who
are commencing feasibility studies,
and therefore do not have share-
holders or permanent workers:

COLLINGWOOD CO-OPERATIVE
OVERSEEING COMMITTEE

36-44 Cambridge St. (03) 417 1093
COLLINGWOOD

Business Activities: Handypersons
and Entertainment services.

SHEPPARTON DISABLED WORKERS GROUP

c/o Ministry of Employment
and Training

Business Activities: Craft products.

ESSENDON JOB GENERATION GROUP

c/o
Essendon City Council
Corners Kellaway Avenue and
Pasco Vale Road
MOONIE PONDS

Business Activities: Metal
press related activities.

MULTI PURPOSE COMMUNITY EMPLOYMENT
CO-OPERATIVE

c/o (03) 555 0333
7 Selwyn Street Ext. 2441
ELSTERNWICK

Business Activities: Building,
Engineering and domestic services.

TURKISH WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION CO-OP

c/o (03) 328 2421
575 Elizabeth Street
MELBOURNE

Business Activities: Handicrafts
and Turkish Carpets.

June Notice:

Co-operative Meeting

WHO:

All Co-operative members,
workers and directors of the
Co-operative Development Program.

WHEN:

June 6th, 1982. 11:00 A.M.

WHERE:

MARYBOROUGH BOOTSTRAP TRADING
CO-OPERATIVE **

REASON:

The Co-operatives decided it was
necessary and desirable for them
to meet. With this in mind they
plan:

* To discuss relevant questions
and issues.

* To share ideas and skills.

* To build co-operation and
strength as a group.

** A FOLLOW-UP LETTER WITH AGENDA
AND LOCATION MAP WILL BE SENT
TO ALL CONCERNED CO-OPERATIVES.

SPACE TO LET AT THE FACTORY

The Factory, which is a workshop/resource centre/meeting place for unemployed people and run by the Collingwood CYSS group, has a large area of its present premises for rent. The premises are at:

36-44 Cambridge Street
COLLINGWOOD

The area is at ground-floor level with a basement section and separate access. It covers about 6,500 square feet and would be rented out for approximately \$10,000 per year.

We are interested in renting to a group or groups whose activities would be complementary to those provided by The Factory. In addition to our skills workshop (teaching a wide range of craft and job skills), we have two job collectives functioning from our Centre. They are

The Collingwood Workers Collective
which provides a Handyperson Service to people,

and

The Circus Factory Performing Troupe
which was formed by local street entertainers who hope to make a business using their performing skills.

Any person or group(s) interested in renting a part or all of this space, please contact Pauline Pope on 417 1093 for further information.

IMMIGRATION GAME, CONTINUED:

Given the commitment of the Board and members of the Co-operative to stimulate the development of the most open, authentic, and inclusive range of materials, the possibilities for Hodja's future seems limitless. But given Phillip Adam's survey figures the challenge is obviously a huge one. Hodja's survival depends on the willingness of teachers to encompass new notions about what kind of knowledge enriches everyday living.

Hodja's range of contributors, subscribers, and client groups is growing. They include: UNICEF, Aboriginal Education Services, Refugee Organizations, The Institute of Multicultural Affairs, and the Girl Guides. Since these clients and creators are involved in education, they have a particular investment in the way resources are put to use in the classroom. A new addition to production staff will be a person responsible for running in-service workshops for teachers to devise and share strategies for the most effective use of Hodja materials.

A grant from the Ministry of Employment and Training, as part of the Co-operative Development Program, has made such an appointment possible. It is only one of the many promising omens which suggest that Hodja is building bridges in Australian society that could well change the complexion of the Adam Survey.

CO-OP IN INDUSTRY, CONTINUED:

- (d) ensure a consultative council has been established of which half the members are elected by secret ballot by and from the non-executive employees and half the members are appointed by management.

An incentive for an Industrial Democracy enterprise which is so registered during the whole of a financial year will be eligibility for a reduction of 8% of tax payable. Where registered for only part of a year the tax reduction will be the corresponding part of 8%.

This Bill has the support of Trade Unions.

While it falls short of the full application of co-operative principles, it is significant progress in this direction, and all concerned with its drafting and progress through the Parliament are worthy of maximum encouragement for continued development along these lines.

Recycling a Railway Station

by Jeff Langdon

3CCC-FM is the first public broadcasting station to be licensed in Victoria since the round of licensing in 1978. It is the first public radio station in Australia to use a microwave unit for studio to transmitter communication. It's the first FM station in Australia to use a recycled television transmitter for its transmission service. It's also the first radio station in Australia to house its studios in a railway station.

This last precedent, the least important in some ways, is the one that has gained triple C the most publicity.

The genesis of 3CCC-FM goes back to 1977 when I was Executive Director of the Castlemaine Education Centre in Castlemaine, just south of Bendigo. (Bendigo is north of Melbourne and Melbourne's nowhere near Sydney). The committee of management of this education resource centre were interested in the prospects of the newly evolving public broadcasting sphere of radio in Australia. Their interest was in the educational potential of such a medium.

It eventuated that the bureaucratic red tape involved in setting up a radio station was immense. You had to talk to the P and T, Telecom, DOC, CFA, Forestry Commission, Department Administration Services, the ABC, the ABT, the Film Commission, the PBAA, the FARB, APRA, and so on. And some of these groups don't even talk to each other!

Two filing cabinets of correspondence and five years later, Goldfields Community Radio Co-operative Ltd. has its license and is broadcasting to all of Central Victoria in magnificent stereo FM. The interesting story is one of much perseverance - people losing interest and falling away, others coming in, and so on. However, a

small group of about thirty people have seen the project through.

In 1980 the group realized it was time to formalize their relationship. A legal status was required. After some investigation of different management models, the co-operative model was adopted. (That's "co-operative" as in conjoint dedication to task completion, not to be confused with "co-operative" as in paternalistic direction to an externally derived goal).

The Co-operative now has 108 shareholders, each owning \$25.00 worth of shares. A further body of listeners chose to subscribe to the program notes. Corporate bodies and businesses can sponsor programs too. Between these sources of income and fundraising, the Co-operative hopes to be able to support a paid staff of three or four after a period of one or two years.

The station took about \$40,000 to set up. This figure would have been about twice that size had it not been for the support of businesses in the area, most notably the local television channel BW8, who donated the transmitter. Of the \$40,000, half was raised locally and half by way of federal grants.

The studios are in the Harcourt Railway Station. As mentioned, this has been the source of a lot of publicity and great mirth among some. The publicity did us no harm, and the mockers have long since ceased to giggle.

The building is a magnificent example of Victorian architecture and construction. The external walls are four bricks thick and the building is very sound. VicRail very generously agreed to lease the building to the Co-operative. It's situation is ideal, in that it is close to the transmission point, Mt. Alexander, and reasonably central to the towns and cities in its service area. It is close to public transport, too. (Unfortunately, the trains don't stop here anymore).

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Education and Training **is Available to You!**

by Barbara Hammond, Director, VOC.

From May onwards this year, the Vocational Orientation Centre will again be organising and offering Education and Training to Co-operatives funded under the Co-operative Development Program.

The V.O.C. ran a pilot project in December, 1981 and January/February, 1982 and organised and contributed to three one-day business workshops, a residential conference, a Co-operative Resource Kit, the video "Up and Running", a bibliography of co-operative materials, and a set of papers about the workshops and conference.

Thanks to your responses the V.O.C. was able to evaluate the Pilot Project and make the following recommendations:

That a further twelve month Education and Training Program for community employment co-operatives be immediately undertaken.

That such a program provides for the following:

- a) Individual consultation and discussion with co-operatives to determine their training needs.
- b) Sound business skills be made available generally to all co-operative participants.
- c) Advanced business skills be offered to specific co-operative participants, e.g. management skills for co-ordinators.
- d) Special induction programs to be devised for newly funded co-operatives, or co-operatives intending to apply for funding; emphasis be given to the place of education and training in their business plans.

- e) Individual training programs for the needs of one co-operative or small groups of co-operatives defining common needs (e.g. focus-based, such as food, printing, etc.). be organized.
- f) State residential conferences involving all participants to be held, allowing for both formal and informal discussion. They should focus on co-operative organizational structures, the relationship between the co-operative, the product, the market and the social context of co-operatives.
- g) The acquisition, development, and dissemination of information and resources pertinent to co-operatives - participants and the general public.

On the basis of these recommendations, the V.O.C. submitted again to the Ministry of Employment and Training to continue education and training for another year, and was successful in receiving funding. The budget of \$72,000 covers:

- o Salaries for two Education & Training Officers at 4/5ths each
- o Conferences, Workshops, and Consultants costs
- o Administration
- o Resources
- o Publishing the Co-operative Review.

Advertisements have been put in the paper for the two positions and we are hoping to have people appointed and working by mid May. One of their first tasks, of course, will be to come out and meet with existing co-operative people.

A planning group made up of the following will meet regularly all year to provide advice and support to the Education and Training Officers: Director, V.O.C.; Co-operative Business Advisor; Representative, Ministry of Employment and Training; Member Co-operative.

Continued on next page...

EDUCATION & TRAINING, CONTINUED:

If you have any suggestions/ideas, please get in touch with us. As with the Pilot Project, we will be seeking your opinions as much as possible so that the education and training we provide will be based on what you want and need.

In the next issue of the Co-operative Review the Education and Training Officers will introduce themselves and talk in more detail about plans for the year.

In the meantime, don't hesitate to contact the V.O.C. for more information.

CO-OPERATIVE EDUCATION AND TRAINING PLANNING GROUP MEETINGS 1982 TIMETABLE

TIME: 4:00 P.M. - 5:00 P.M.

PLACE: VOCATIONAL ORIENTATION
CENTRE
42 Cardigan Street
CARLTON

DATES: May 18 August 10
June 1 August 24
June 15 September 21
June 29 October 19
July 13 November 16
July 29 December 14

RECYCLING A RAILWAY STATION, CONTINUED:

As a project - creating a 2KW stereo FM broadcasting station from nothing - it is at once a great credit to those involved with it, and a great source of pride and satisfaction for those same people.

Keep listening...

Wanderfood - A Vision of Equality

Establishing a small business which is based and run on co-operative principles is increasingly seen as part of the answer to the growing problem of unemployment. For one collective of women, creating their own paid-employment is only part of the motivation behind their enterprise.

Wanderfood is the name under which eight women will operate a co-operatively run business which makes and sells hot vegetarian food. They'll sell their food from a van which will visit various places - mainly beach resorts in summer and market venues at other times of the year. It is also envisaged that Wanderfood will cater for functions throughout the year, as time and resources permit.

As well as creating jobs and avoiding management hierarchy, Wanderfood will provide child care services and skill sharing. They are committed to meeting other equally important aims, such as flexibility of working hours - rarely achieved in the traditional work place - and allied to that, the setting-up and maintenance of a working environment which allows for complete equality in the decision-making process, and a flexibility in the allocation of essential tasks.

Prior to receiving funding assistance under the Co-operative Development Program the group operated as a feminist collective. In forming that collective was a recognized need to share the work-load, decision-making, and the responsibilities equally among the members. There is no conflict between the business and what could be termed broadly the social aims of Wanderfood since what constitutes the business side, i.e. the ordering and cooking of food, driving, bookkeeping, etc...are tasks which can and are rotated, thus fulfilling their basic social goals of equal work.

The decision was made to limit the group's size, since it was felt the strong sense of commitment and the mutual trust and support which is basic to Wanderfood could not be maintained with a larger group.

Co-operatives . . . Working Another Way

THE VOCATIONAL ORIENTATION CENTRE HAS PRODUCED A FOUR PART RESOURCE KIT TO PROVIDE INFORMATION ABOUT CO-OPERATIVES.

IT PROVIDES DETAILED INFORMATION ON:

- * ESTABLISHED LOCAL EMPLOYMENT CO-OPERATIVES
- * HISTORY OF CO-OPERATIVES
- * HOW TO SET UP AN EMPLOYMENT CO-OPERATIVE
- * USEFUL SUPPORT AND INFORMATION AGENCIES
- * CO-OPERATIVE CONTACTS

AND MORE....

THE KIT, ILLUSTRATED BELOW, COMES IN A STURDY ENVELOPE WHICH STORES AND PROTECTS ITS CONTENTS. IT IS AVAILABLE THROUGH THE VOCATIONAL ORIENTATION CENTRE LIBRARY, OR MAY BE PURCHASED FOR \$3.00.

